231 gland of the animal was packed in cowhorns, and exported as a fixer for scents and perfumes. But the average Amhara farmer does not keep civet cat (zebāt).

Livestock is perhaps even more important economic property than land. Since land tenure is uncertain and complicated and since the produce from land is usually consumed by rent, taxes, obligations, and food for the family, any capital surplus and private property is largely expressed in livestock, particularly in the absence of valuable tools. [42] Also, land is at best owned by a man's kin, while livestock is personal property.

231 436 Livestock prices at the rural and provincial-urban markets are still quoted in Mariah Theresa Thalers, although the actual coin is now illegal and may not be used in transactions. The compromise that has developed is to quote MT thalers for livestock only, and to pay in paper or coins of the present legal Ethiopian currency at the rate of Ethiopian $1.50 per MT 1. --(U.S.$0.60). MT Thalers are quoted for sale only, because of the significance of such a transaction, while rent is quoted in modern Ethiopian dollars.

231 583 Cattle: An Amhara peasant may own from 1 to 150 cows, mean about 5. A rich peasant may own about 50 cows, a few bulls, a dozen oxen, 5 mules, over 50 sheep and and goats. In giving his daughter in marriage he may pridefully give her 20 cows, especially if the groom contributes an equal number. A poor peasant may be hard put to give his daughter 3 cows, which is a respectable minimum, and may have to borrow two cows to fill that, but he can hold off fulfillment of the contribution until a few

563 parative wealth may be envied, but his religion, and
443 his habit of taking several wives from ex-slave (Barya),
554 Sudanese, lowland females, places him on a level with the upper ethnic craftsmen class. The fact that his labor is not manual elevates him a bit. The full Arab from Yemen or Arabia is regarded as a foreigner, and there is little concern about him since he does not participate in the social hierarchy of the Coptic Amhara.

436 Silver coinage for major transactions, until recently, was the Maria Theresa Thaler, bearing the year 1780, even if coined much later, imported, and sometimes referred to as "machedo", sickle. The recent laws of the present emperor provide for confiscation and punishment for possession of this now illegal currency, but peasants and townsmen have them hidden and silversmiths can still obtain them with little difficulty. The habit of burying coins for safekeeping has carried over to modern paper money. Every year cases of buried paper money that decayed in the rainy season become the talk of the town. The former MT Thaler was divided as follows:

1 MT Thaler = 16" temun" silver coins of Menelik; the term "temun" is now used for silver ornaments, though the new Ethiopian 25¢ piece is actually used in exchange, or even in ornaments.

= 16 "gresh", the Egyptian-Turkish piastre coined in 1899, no longer used, and rarely seen.

436

= 2 "alad", Menelik half-thaler, no longer used.

= 4 "rub", quarter MT Thalers, no longer in use, but still occasionally quoted.

The term "gresh" is still used in its probable derivative, the well-known "gursha", meaning tip given to a servant, etc., apparently replacing an earlier term. Also, it is interesting that Gresham's Law functions also in Ethiopia: The new coinage, once accepted (rather than fear of prosecution) drove the old MT Thaler out of circulation. Furthermore, from time to time certain items of the new coinage become particularly popular for some temporary reason, and then are hoarded and absent from circulation.

471 In traditional Amhara material culture there is an absence of such processing industries, (except for specializations mentioned), as soap factories, flour mills, brick factories, textile factories, timber mills, sugar industries, power industries (no windmills), though the essentials for such industries exist. Foreigners have, in recent decades, built a few small ones at major centers of population, since Menelik and the present Emperor began handing out concessions. There are economic and national reasons, e.g. the law that foreigners may only rent but not buy real estate. The present government of Ethiopia has a monopoly on and produces matches and cigarettes. Whether private or public, processing industries can be expected to increase gradually and only about

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

648 to assist us and order equipment to be given us for our journey, that he forgot all this, and also that he was not mindful of the friendship which they had established and sworn, since he did so little for the affairs of the King of Portugal. Neither on this account did he make any more haste, but always excused himself with his guest, and with being ill. On the 6th of July seven or eight horsemen arrived, very gaily caparisoned, these were Moors, and seemed to be honourable persons, they came from other countries, and brought many very beautiful horses, which they were bringing to pay as tribute which they owed to Prester John and the Barnagais. As the arrival of the Moors redounded to his profit, neither his guests nor his sickness impeded him. The great reception and honour which the Barnagais paid to these Moors gave us great trouble. The ambassador had told him that he wanted 648 661 twelve mules, and asked him to order them to be lent: he said that he could not lend them, and that we should buy them. When we wished to buy these mules which the people of the country were selling to us, the servants of the Barnagais came and interrupted the purchase, telling the vendors not to sell them, and that if they sold them they would be punished, and the gold would be taken away from them, for in this country money is not current. This happened in such manner that the rumour of it spread throughout the country, and the people told us that even if they wished to sell to us they did not dare, from fear of the Barnagais, because he wished to sell his own mules, and therefore forbade their selling them. (He has another method with the people of his country.) In all the kingdoms of Prester 436 John money is not current, but only gold by weight, and the principal weight is called *ouquia*,[1] and this, which is an ounce, makes in weight ten cruzados, and for change there is a half ouquia, and from twelve drachms to ten make

[1] A gold coin in some parts of Africa.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

an ouquia. This Barnagais forbade the people in his country having any other weights except his own, and they had to ask the Barnagais or his factors for the weights whenever they had to sell or receive gold, so that he had knowledge of what was in the country, and he takes it when he pleases, according to what his country people say, who must know it well.

CAP. XXIX.—*Of the church of the town of Barra, and its ornaments, and of the fair there, and of the merchandise, and costumes of the friars, nuns, and priests.*

In this town of Barra there is a church of Our Lady, large, new, very well painted and well built, and handsomely ornamented with many brocades, crimson silks, and Mekkah velvets, and red camlets. The church in this town is served like that at Barua, only that the offices are more solemnized because the Barnagais resides here, and because here there are more clergy and an infinite number of friars. The church is managed by priests. I saw them make a procession round the church in the greater circuit, which is of the churchyard. In it there were many priests, friars, and men and women, because in this church the women receive the communion in the place where the laity do so. In that procession I saw the ornaments which I have mentioned: they must have taken quite thirty turns round the church chaunting like a litany, and sounding many drums and cymbals, as they sound them when they make a procession before the effigy of Our Lady on Sundays and feast days; and they sing and celebrate a feast; and likewise when they give the communion on feast days. They said that this procession was made in supplication to God for rain for their sowing. The bells are of stone, like those of other churches, and the bells badly made. In this town there is a great fair like that of Barua, and so likewise in all the

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

which we call of Guinea, there they are called zegra, quails, 136
pigeons, turtles, hawks, falcons, kites, eagles, thrushes, sparrows, swallows, nightingales, larks, wild ducks, of different kinds,[1] and other waterfowl, herons, cranes, *hemas*, and all other birds that may be in the world, and not known to us; and there are all in this country except magpies and cuckoos, which I never saw, nor heard of their being there.

There are so many apes, that in the kingdom of the Barnagais, in a town which is named Ceroel, at the time the harvest is ripe, they pursue them till they make them pass a mountain; and they keep guard over them in a pass by day, because at night they do not move about, and they give a certain provision to two men who keep guard over them until the corn is gathered in, when they let them loose, or leave off keeping watch over them.

There is much basil in the thickets, and there are none 137
of our trees except cypresses, plumtrees, and willows by the rivers; there are no melons, cucumbers, nor horse-radish.

In the country there is no gold or silver money, and pur- 436
chases are made by exchange of one thing for another, principally salt, which is current throughout the country as money.

There is linen there, but it gives no fibre, and no stuff is 248
made with it; there is much cotton, and stuff made of it; there is much coloured cloth, and there is a very cold country where they wear serge.

The churches there are well built, but the walls are not 346
well wrought, and they do not place anything upon them; they pitch [the roof] upon props, which reach from the ground upwards.

In the country there is gold, silver, copper and tin, but 135
they do not know how to get it out of the mines.

[1] *Adens, marrecas.*

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

492 second toes. Even the king rides bare-footed; and being used chiefly to mules, they are far inferior horsemen to the Arabs.

Price of Gold. Gold, at a medium, sells for 10 pataka 436 each wakea; or 10 derims, salt, at a medium 8 per pataka. 435 The piece (of salt), speaking of it identically, is called Kourman, but in estimation, or such a thing costs so many salts, they are called Amooli. These are the ordinary currency for the necessaries of life. For considerable purchases, gold is used; and there is great loss in cutting the wakea into derims, at least one in ten. The gold is got by [316] washing the earth in water, in wooden dishes. The grains, that remain behind are put into a quill, melted down, and [325] alloyed, probably by the Shangalla; for it is pale, and is never brought to market in its first form, but melted down into small rods, or ingots. In Joas's time a wakea was valued only at 8 patakas. Yasous Tanush, or the II. turned round, and reduced the Sennaar Shangalla; but they are now quite independant of Habbesh. Their fair is held at Buré in Damot.

804 *Weights and Measures.* The wakea (or ounce), in Abyssinia, is considered as 10 derims, or drams, and 12 ounces 436 make a litir, or rotol (pound). At Gondar, the capital of all Abyssinia, the wakea is 6 drams, 40 grains, Troy weight English, and divided into 10 drams of 40 grains. The small money is salt bricks, dug out of the mines at Dancali, near the myrrh country. Every wakea, in ordinary times, gives from 72 to 76 salts. In 1769, the wakea was 80 salts, and June 15th, 1771, the wakea sold at 34, but there was a great difference in the size of the bricks. These are little or not at all liable to waste, as M. Montesquieu supposes. Abyssinian gold at Mocha is 15 or 16 patakas when the Sennaar gold is 22, because the Agows, &c. alloy it with silver.

At Masuah, the current money is the Venetian sequin, the pataka, or queen's dollar, and half-dollars. For small money are used grains of glass, called borjook, three of which make a chebir (Vid. Book V. Chap. ii.)

436 Corn sold at Masuah for four patakas the ardep, which 304 contains about 24 measures of the country. Coffee, six rotol per pataka, sometimes ten, or even 15 rotol. Honey,

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

impressions conveyed by much of the literature on Ethiopia, is not a normal ecological unit in Amhara society.

Each homestead gives the appearance of self-sufficiency and autonomy, but it is bound to a wider social context in a number of ways. While satisfying most of its consumption needs by its own efforts, every household depends on the market for certain items. The highland peasants must go to market for their chili, onions, peppers, hops, and cotton; while lowland peasants must barter for barley and sheep there. Salt and foreign fabrics must be imported from afar, and iron and clay products must be bought from specialists who bring their wares. Limited needs for currency—chiefly for rifles and, since 1942, taxes—are also met at the market.

The markets normally are held once a week. Every homestead is within walking distance of at least one market; though often the trip may take several hours, at times the greater part of a day. Markets in the same region are often scheduled on different days, so that, for example, the family which misses the one five hours to the north on Saturday can catch another four hours to the south on Tuesday. The virtual absence of roads throughout the countryside makes travel to market slow and tedious, but wealthier peasants nonetheless manage to transport quantities of grain and livestock to the provincial capitals for better prices and a wider selection of consumers' goods.

The household is linked to a wider world politically as well as economically. By providing tithes, revenues, military service, and corvée labor, the peasant has traditionally been obliged to support an extensive political hierarchy. In return for this he has received an organization for defending the country against enemies, and a structure of legitimate authority sufficient to maintain order and settle disputes.

The peasant's relations with this political hierarchy have been mediated by the office of *chīqā shum*, a district headman. This office is circulated, usually annually, among a small number of men whose eligibility is based on their ownership of certain pieces of land. As the land passes from father to son, so does the eligibility for being *chīqā shum*.

Traditionally the *chīqā shum* was a role of considerable importance. It carried the duties of tax collection, adjudication, promulgation of official decrees, supervision of occasional work projects, levying of men for military service, and officiating at civil marriages and divorces. Through his work the *chīqā shum* received a variety of fees and bribes. In cases of flagrant misbehavior the local people were able to dismiss him from office. The reorganization of provincial administration since 1942 has deprived the *chīqā shum* of many of his former powers, but the office still exists and plays a modest role in peasant life.

The district over which a *chīqā shum* has authority is the closest thing to a village unit among the Amhara. It is usually coterminous with the area sur-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

games with sticks and cloth, or wooden, balls. The adult males may do odd jobs around home, such as loading and moving bags of grain, or repairing farm equipment. But they are likely to gather at some convenient spot, perhaps at a boundary between fields, and discuss land disputes, arrange marriages, reconcile quarrels, or tell stories.

The daily activity of the Amhara peasant is somber and severe. It is guided by the constant awareness that one must provide for oneself everything he needs in this world. His is a life of deadening exertion, devoid of casual gaiety. Even in his diversions the mood is generally serious and tense.

One of the Amhara peasant's principal diversions is litigation. On days when heavy labor is forbidden the judge's yard is filled; nor is it ever empty on work days. Some peasants spend as much as twenty to twenty-five per cent of their waking days at court. (Because of its importance in Amhara culture, litigation will be discussed at greater length in later chapters.)

Going to market is another diversion. The trip is made by the peasant or his wife, or both, according to the needs of the household. The wife usually is responsible for transactions dealing with cooking equipment and spices, the husband for animals and farm equipment, while either is competent to negotiate about the great common denominator of Amhara life—grain. Exchanges are made either by barter or currency, which in olden times consisted of salt bars, pepper, and iron, as well as silver.

The market provides an occasion for seeing distant relatives and friends, catching up on the latest news of the area, and generally countering the normal isolation of the peasant's life. It is especially stimulating for children, who may be treated to a piece of sugar cane if they are lucky. But the marketgoers are less absorbed with being sociable than they are with the serious business of locating the items they lack, haggling over the terms of exchange, and getting on the trail in time to arrive home before dark.

Finally, the peasant's day may be devoted to one of the many celebrations that constitute the brightest moments in his life. Huge feasts are held on the occasion of weddings, christenings, and memorial anniversaries. Feasts and special festive activities mark the various religious holidays. Indeed, apart from the alternation of the rainy season (June-September) and the long dry season, and the related alternation of planting and harvesting the different crops, it is the cycle of holidays and weddings that defines the pattern of the Abyssinian year. Yet even these holidays have a fundamentally serious tone. Apart from the feasting, they are chiefly times for the veneration of sacred symbols and the real or symbolic letting out of aggression.

The Yearly Cycle

The new year falls on St. John's Day in September. For this occasion the floor of the peasant's home is strewn with freshly cut grass, tall and green after

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

cate that boys sometimes borrow the certificates of more successful friends and enter jobs under those assumed names. Often they live for many months with no livelihood at all. Eventually, some find work as houseboys, shine shoes, or peddle merchandise on the streets; others, on an impulse, sign up for life in one of the military services. Still others are reduced to begging, or stealing, or concocting stories with which to extract help from sympathetic foreigners.

The lives of such boys, whose number is large and steadily growing, are among the chief casualties of Ethiopia's transition to date. As they increase, their misery will become more vocal, and they may constitute an element of political unrest. Whether or not they become a political problem, they are already a social problem.

The modern adolescents, by contrast, comprise a small and determinate number.* In 1958–59, the year in which my research on them began, there were all together about 3,900 students in the academic secondary schools, 3,350 in other special schools at the secondary level, and 760 students at the post-secondary level. One source of information on these students was a questionnaire which was completed by 700 students: 500 at the secondary level, including 40 female students, in a total of 15 schools, and 200 male students in five colleges.[12] Some of the findings from this survey will be woven into the following text where appropriate.

Compared to the rest of their countrymen, and certainly those of the same age, the modern adolescents have lived in luxury. Most students at the secondary level, and all those at the college level, have been boarding students. At no cost to themselves or their parents, they have received full board and room, a token allotment of clothes, and their books. Day students have received instead a monthly allowance of Eth$20,† approximately the same amount that unskilled laborers earn for full-time work. Tuition is also free for all full-time Ethiopian students at all levels.

These "welfare school" conditions were designed to make further education attractive and possible for Ethiopian students, nearly all of whose families either can not or are unwilling to support their children for many years in school. In this, the parents are following long established Amhara custom, for in the traditional society boys who went off to church schools often did so, as we have seen, without the support of their parents, and in any case were expected to gain their livelihood by begging. Nowadays, if their children are admitted to one of the government secondary schools, even tradition-minded

* And one that grows steadily. In 1958 there were twenty-eight government secondary schools in the empire. By 1964 the number had increased to forty-seven.

† One Ethiopian dollar is equal to (U.S.) forty cents.